Alumnus Everett Cobb Receives MSOE's Prestigious Pioneer Award

MSOE alumnus Everett Cobb dropped in on the campus in March for the first anniversary of WMSE-FM, the station started by his $30,000 donation. Last year when the station was dedicated, Cobb headed back to Reno with a WMSE jacket. This year he returned home with the prestigious MSOE Pioneer Award, presented at the station's anniversary reception to commemorate his 58 years in radio.

The Pioneer Award fits Cobb perfectly. He has pioneered all phases of radio in such areas as set building, amateur broadcasting, performing, engineering, announcing, sales, management and ownership.

"I shall ever be grateful to my instructors at MSOE for the education they gave me here," Cobb told the Administrative Committee. "I made a lot of money but I didn't get a great deal out of that," Cobb continued. "I find more satisfaction in accomplishing something, getting the job done. There's a lot to be said in favor of engineering education. The world would be a better place if we had more engineers. The engineer has to be honest. You can't fool with electrical laws, the laws of physics, or the laws of nature. You can't be a good engineer and be dishonest - no way.

"I would say that the school has always played a prominent part in any success that I might have had. I was an extension of the school. There were things I learned here that enabled me to have an edge down the line.

"In this day and age the very welfare of the system depends upon the engineer. Engineering logic, engineering know-how is good for all of us, the family and the country."

Cobb reminisced about his early days in radio which in the 1920s was causing concern in some people fearing disturbance with the weather. In that day, he remarked, it was almost beyond comprehension that the human voice could be made to travel through the air waves. Today, among environmentalists and others there is concern about the high level of radiation interfering with the health of people. Scientifically and medically, we don't know of any harm that's been done, said Cobb, adding wryly "should there be harm, it's been done by the radiation called television, which is the devil's answer to God's gift of radio."

Everett Cobb took his turn in the studio during a recent visit to WMSE. Cobb was on hand for the Milwaukee School of Engineering station's first anniversary.

Cobb came to MSOE because the college considered radio — not too many schools at the time did. MSOE's early station was taken over by Wisconsin News in 1928 and became WISN. There, Cobb started the Sunny Jim Club and watched it grow to 90,000 signed members. He put on radio shows at the old Davidson Theater and later at the Wisconsin Theater. With other studio people, he started a noonday program called the Thrifty Shopper which in its heyday attracted correspondence from 50,000 letter writers.

At that time, UP, AP, and IMS, the news wireservices, would not do business with radio stations because their customers were the newspapers. When, through court action, they were obliged to do so, Cobb became a reporter. One of his first stories was about a power failure in Manitowoc which happened to black out a hospital while a surgeon friend of his was performing an appendectomy. The auxiliary power failed to come on. So the surgeon finished up with the aid of a flashlight. UP dramatized the story and among the papers using it was the London Times.

From here, Cobb moved to Reno, NV, where he later acquired Radio Station KNEV-FM. On his retirement a few years ago, he sold his holdings out of which came his substantial contribution to the MSOE Radio Club for the new FM station now beginning its second year of operation.

Alum Irvine Palmer Honored

Only three years after he started Central Manufacturing Corp. with his wife, Beryl, MSOE alumnus